

References

- Pinar, William F. (1975). *Sanity, Madness, and the School*. In W. Pinar (ed.), *Curriculum Theorizing: The Reconceptualists* (359-383). Berkeley, CA: McCutchan.
- Pinar, William F. (1975). Search for a Method. In W. Pinar (ed.), *Curriculum Theorizing: The Reconceptualists* (415-424). Berkeley, CA: McCutchan.
- Woolf, Virginia (1924). *Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown*. London: The Hogarth Press.

FROM:

Pinar, W. F. (1994). *Autobiography, Politics and Sexuality: Essays in Curriculum Theory 1972-1992*. New York: Peter Lang.

III

The Method of *Currere* (1975)

1.

It is regressive—progressive—analytical—synthetical. It is therefore temporal and conceptual in nature, and it aims for the cultivation of a developmental point of view that hints at the transtemporal and tranconceptual. From another perspective, the method is the self-conscious conceptualization of the temporal, and from another, it is the viewing of what is conceptualized through time. So it is that we hope to explore the complex relation between the temporal and conceptual. In doing so we might disclose their relation to the Self and its evolution and education.

2.

I want to try to understand the contribution of my formal academic studies make to my understanding of my life. I am talking as hypothesis that I am in a biographic situation, and while in certain ways I have chosen it (and hence must bear responsibility for it), in other ways I can see that it follows in somewhat causal ways from previous situations. I can look at my life in a linear way, acknowledging its actual multidimensional character, but limiting my view to a linear one, to make it more manageable, and I see that this has led to that; in that circumstance I chose that, rejected this alternative; I affiliated with those people, then left them for these, that this field intrigued me, then that one; I worked on this problem, then that one. And if I chart these choices and circumstances on a time line, and then

begin to describe (as I remember it now), the transitions from that situation to the one that followed, I see that there is a certain coherence. Not necessarily a logical one, but a lived one, a felt one. The point of coherence is the biography as it is lived: the *lebenswelt*.

What role in this biography do my evolving intellectual interests play? In what ways do they contribute to an understanding of the dominant themes of this biography? In what ways have they permitted biographic movement, that is, freed one from interests whose life has gone out of them, and drawn one on into areas that excite? What is the relation of these interests and concomitant professional activities to one's private life? I must have not submerged agendas here; I must be willing to impartially describe the relation between my professional work and my personal work, not succumbing to popular attitudes, whether these insist the two must be connected or must remain separate.

There are many related questions, but the predominant one is: what has been and what is now the nature of my educational experience?

By taking as hypothesis that I do not know the answer to this question, I take myself and my existential experience as a data source. The method of data generation is like the psychoanalytical technique of free association. I take a particular question, like why am I involved in the research project which occupies me now? and I record, by pen or recorder, all that occurs to me, regardless how esoteric and hence unrelated the information apparently is. But I get ahead of myself.

My hunch is that by working in the manner I will describe, I will obtain information that will move me biographically, and not only linearly, but multidimensionally. If I take my current perspective, and try to put parentheses around it (so to speak) by recording it, then I have moved to another vantage point. If I write about my biographic situation as I see it (not as I want to see, although this can be included), then it is as if I have escaped from it. It is there, on the paper in a way, and I am still here, at the typewriter, looking at the print and the conceptualization of the perspective that was mine, and so the place is new. In Sartre's language, I have totalized my situation, and

the new sum is where I conceptually (and more inclusively, biographically) am now. Because the view is new, the old problem (say it was a research problem) is seen differently. But because the problem is inherently a partial product of my conceptual apparatus, and because this apparatus functions slightly differently since its operator has moved slightly, the problem itself poses itself differently, and hence the problem is different.

We use an analogous strategy sometimes without thinking about it. If something stumps us, we back off (we say) to do something else, then come at it again later. I am willing to guess that we do this, that is, we allow time to pass before we attempt to reconceive the problem, because we must move on to another level, from where the problem looks different and hence is different, and the solution may then become clear. We left the problem initially because we could not solve it on the conceptual level where we were at first. Perhaps formal studies, like literary theory, or physics, can be utilized to illuminate the myriad of surface ways, and subliminal ways, we evolve through time, how our intellectual interests evolve through time.

3.

Regressive. The first step of the method is regressive. One returns to the past, to capture it as it was, and as it hovers over the present. Let me illustrate.

Listening to this paper being read one can be said to be absorbed in the present. As soon as we have said that seemingly simple statement, we slip into complexity. In which present is one absorbed? Is it the concrete, literal present? That is, is one attending to the sight and sound of Pinar reading, of sitting in a certain chair in a certain room amid others? Or is the present where one dwells what we can call an abstract, conceptual present? Perhaps it is the conceptual reality created by the words that I read, perhaps it is a more private one, and thoughts, your own thoughts "what is this about?" or "who is it I'm to have lunch with today?" or "I must remember to phone home before too late tonight." A survey would probably reveal that the majority dwell in the conceptual present (rather than

the concrete present); maybe mine (as I read), probably yours (your ideas of what it is I'm saying; your plans for the next day).

My guess is that to the extent one dwells in a conceptual present, and in the subjective present, is the extent to which one dwells in the past. Not just the literal past, as the memory of arrival last night, which like the literal present often is superficially apparent and just as superficially important.

The biographic past? It is usually ignored. Ignored but not absent. The biographic past exists presently, complexly contributive to the biographic present. While we say it cannot be held accountable for the present, the extent to which it is ignored is probably the extent it does account for what is present.

Unconsciousness perpetuates itself. Hence the formation of habit, of habitual responses to seemingly characteristic stimuli; responses that are to varying degrees (we say) unjust, or not. The habitual is the surface is the public, the outer, and its strength or the force of habit, is probably positively correlated with unconsciousness and capture by the past. The present then becomes an acting out of the past, the superimposition of past issues and situations and persons onto the present. The complex of habitual responses is constitutive of the present personality. Its predictability is its habituality is its unconsciousness is its pastness.

In all likelihood one is in the past while in the present. The present is then veiled; the past is manifest and apparent, however, so transparently present that it is veiled, and one assumes oneself to be in the present when one is not. To ascertain where one is, when one is, one must locate the past. Locating means identification means bracketing the past. Bracketing means looking at what is not ordinarily seen, at what is taken-for-granted, hence loosening oneself from it. As the past becomes, the present is revealed. So it is we aim at freedom from the past, freedom in the present. Such objectives require entrance into the past as a first step.

One must regress. Not in the commonsensical fear of losing one's hard-won maturity, and becoming infantile. Nor not necessarily involving dramatic and painful character decrystallization, as in the Janovian approach to psychotherapy. [Although it

is true that as one leaves the present to enter the past one detaches from one's acculturated character. This detachment is sufficiently subtle as to escape notice, but it does initiate a gradual process of decrystallization and accompanying disclosure of a nonstatic, nonarrested character always in transition.]

Re—back. Gradi—to go back. One goes back, and there one finds the past intact. The past is entered, lived in, but not necessarily succumbed to. Because one is not there concretely one is not necessarily vulnerable. One avoids complete identification with the self that was, and hence is able to observe.

That is the point of this phase of the method: to observe functioning in the past. Since the focus of the method is educational experience, one takes special notice of one's past life-in-schools, with one's past life-with-schoolteachers and one's past life-with-books and other school-related artifacts. Observe and record. Include present responses to what is observed.

It is suggested that one return to the schooled beginning, to the elementary years, to wherever one is able to reach. Enter again the classroom, watch the teachers, yourself and your classmates, what you did. More importantly how you did it. From the start did your attention adhere to the public program? To what extent did you absent yourself in fantasy? Did these absences coincide with particular lessons (like geography) and with particular teachers?

Do not attempt to interpret what you observe at this point. Interpretation interrupts presence in the past.

On through the primary grades into junior and senior high school, keeping the observer's focus on the self. The self, in this classroom, with that teacher, these subjects, this response to that teacher, the intervention of parents regarding that situation, and one's response. One's attachment to these subjects, to those teachers; one's disinterest in that field, one's dislike of this teacher.

Athletic and other extracurricular interests if any and their effects upon one's studies. Erotic interests as they impinged upon one's studies. The importance of public conceptions of status. This college or that? The self amidst it all, evolving this way, leaving those friends, taking on these, having these academic interests, then those.

Through the undergraduate years. These courses, those professors. These friends. What sequence?

Autumn. Winter. Spring.

Summer jobs. Building houses in the suburbs, reading Bertrand Russell during lunch breaks. What was on the subject's mind those months? What mood, not visible then perhaps, kept him encapsulated, blurring his view?

School again in the fall. Taking these courses. Studying in the library, trying to in the dormitory. This girl, that friend, the War, anger, hatred, becoming awake, rather thinking oneself awake and knowing but neither awake nor knowing, always thinking, one's physical body absent, mostly.

The major subject finally chosen. Onto graduate school. Graduation and a teaching job. Professional meetings. The present moment.

The subject's life, his or her educational life, also his or her life in schools (the disentangling of those terms to come later). It exists still; one re-centers it; one goes back; one regresses; it is there, here, present. Recording it via words; conceptualizing it.

Bringing the past to the present by printing it. The words coalesce to form a photograph. Holding the photograph in front of oneself, one studies the detail, the literal holding of the picture and one's response to it, suggestive of the relation of past to present.

Thus we conclude the first step of the procedure, the regression to the past and the return to the present.

4.

Progressive. Progressive derives from *pro* meaning "before" and *grati* meaning "to step, go." In this phase we look the other way. We look, in Sartre's language, at what is not yet the case, what is not yet present. We have found that the future is present in the same sense that the past is present. It influences, in complicated ways, the present; it forns the present.

Sit alone, perhaps in a slightly darkened room, in a comfortable chair with a writing table and a pen. Close the eyes, place the attention on the breathing. Take a few slow deep breaths as these are comfortable. The point of these minutes is relaxa-

tion. After one is relaxed, one thinks of the future, of tomorrow, of next week, of the new few months, of the next academic year, of the next three years and so on. Since our interest is educational experience, gently bring the attention back to matters associated with your intellectual interests, and allow your mind to work free associatively. Record what comes. Try to discern where your intellectual interests are going, the relation between these evolving interests and your private life, between these two and evolving historical conditions. Perhaps you will begin to see something of the interdependent nature of your interests and the historical situation. If you are a teacher, focus on your teaching, on your relationships to students and to colleagues, especially on the emotional content of these, as well as on the intellectual content. Discern where these appear to be going. You might imagine a future, perhaps a year hence or perhaps several years hence; describe it. (It is important in the progressive as well as the regressive moment to free associate, to avoid use of the rational, logical, and critical aspects. Don't, for instance, conclude that an imagined future state is unreasonable. At this stage allow usually buried visions of what is not yet present to manifest.)

Do this for as long as it is comfortable; when resistance occurs take note of its quality and content. Do not force the process.

Return to the chair and this dwelling in imagined future states several times on different days over a period of several days or weeks or months. Such elongation of the experiment reduces the possibility of distortion of temporary preoccupations. Increased is the likelihood that the photographs taken are reflective of more lasting anticipations. This completes the progression.

5.

Analytical. One takes photographs, and sets them aside. What is left? Describe the biographic present, exclusive of the past and future, but inclusive of responses to them.

For many the present is woven into the fabric of institutional life. Within that historical form, embodied concretely in the

building which houses your office and those who are your colleagues and students, what is your present? What are one's intellectual interests? What is one's emotional condition?

To what ideas, what areas of study, which discipline, is one drawn? From what is one repelled? List these. Describe, not interpret these attractions. Photograph the present as if one were a camera, including oneself in the present taking the photograph, and your response to this process.

Description via conceptualization is breaking into parts the organic whole.

And—up, throughout. *Lysis*—a loosening. Conceptualization is detachment from experience. Bracketing what is, what was, what can be, one is loosened from it, potentially more free of it, hence more free to freely choose the present, and future.

Study the three photographs. What are they; what is their individuality? What fundamental biographic theme(s) do they express? Why are they as they are?

Interpretation must make more visible what is lived through directly. Interpretation must not subordinate the lived present to an abstract, analytical grid. One's analysis is a constituent element of the present, like the brain a part of the body, not the body a thought in the brain. The biographic present is not part of a conceptual system; the system is an aspect of the present.

Juxtapose the three photographs: past, present, future. What are their complex, multi-dimensional interrelations? How is the future present in the past, the past in the future, and the present in both?

6.

Synthetical. *Syn* means "together" and *tithenai* means "to place."

Put them aside.

Then look at oneself concretely, as if in a mirror. Attention on the breath, to underline the biological concreteness of being.

Who is that?

In your own voice, what is the meaning of the present?

What is the contribution of my scholarly and professional work to my present? Do they illumine the present? Obscure it? Are one's intellectual interests biographically freeing; that is, do they permit, in fact encourage, movement?

Do they point to increased conceptual sophistication and refinement, deeper knowledge and understanding, of both one's chosen field of study and that field's symbolic relation to one's evolving biography? Do they move one to enter new, higher levels of being?

What conceptual gestalt is finally visible? That is, what is one's "point of view?" Can one bracket and thus escape from the conceptual, take it into one's hands as it were, examine it, and see its relation to one's psychological, physical, biographic condition? See its relation to "one's form of life?" This includes one's public and private lives; one's externally observable behavior and the contents of one's stream-of-consciousness.

The physical body may be a concrete manifestation of all that occurs in and through it.

The Self is available to itself in physical form. The intellect, residing in physical form, is part of the Self. The Self is not a concept the intellect has of itself. The intellect is an appendage of the Self, a medium, like the body, through which the Self and the world are accessible to themselves.

Mind in its place, I conceptualize the present situation.

I am placed together.

Synthesis.